(b) Government of India is opposed to multilateral talks as proposed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan in the statement referred to in the news item. Such multilateral talks have been proposed in the past as well. The proposal involves issues which are either bilateral—and so should be addressed bilaterally under the Simla Agreement—or are not confined to a particular region or amenable to a regional solution—and so ought to be approached from much wider perspective.

The statement of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, which was part of her anti-India tirade in the US, contravenes the spirit of the Simla Agreement and further vitiates the atmosphere for bilateral relations.

(c) In interactions with the US and other government's India's position on these and other issues raised by Pakistani Prime Minister during her visit to the U.S. and Government's commitment to the bilateral approach enshrined in the Simla Agreement, will continue to be reiterated.

Reorientation of Nuclear Policy

7961. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI:

SHRI JANARDAN YADAV:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Pakistan is building another Nuclear facility, capable of processing weapons grade plutonium; if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(b) which are the countries reported to be transferring the nuclear technology to Pakistan and which of them are signatories to NPT; and

(c) whether Government have reoriented its nuclear policy in view of the increasing threat from Pakistan's nuclear potential?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government is aware that Pakistan is constructing, with assistance from China, a 40 MW research reactor at Khustiab which will enable Pakistan to have access to weapons grade plutonium. It has been reported that China is assisting Pakistan in this project. Government is also aware of Pakistan's clandestine weapons oriented nuclear programme. In pursuing this programme, Pakistan has acquired equipment and technology from US and a large number of west European countries which are states parties to the NPT.

(c) India has an extensive nuclear programme which is exclusively geared towards peaceful purposes. However, the security situation of India remains constantly under review, particularly in the light of developments in the neighbourhood and Government will take all measures necessary to cope with any threat that may be posed to the security of the nation.

Offer of Iranian President to Mediate in Kashmir Dispute

7962. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the press conference held on the 19th April, 1995 the visiting Iranian President had stated that Iran was unhappy and unsatisfied over the situation in Kashmir and had offered to mediate to resolve the Kashmir dispute etc:

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (c) Addressing a press conference in New Delhi on 19th April, 1995, the President of Iran, *inter-alia*, stated that Iran is unhappy over the situation in J&K; would call for a peaceful resolution of the issue through a dialogue between India and Pakistan taking into account the wishes of the people of J&K; and Iran would be prepared to be of assistance in this regard.

Government's position is well-known i.e. it is committed to resolve all differences with Pakistan, including aspects related to Jammu & Kashmir issue, peacefully and through bilateral negotiations within the frame work of the Simla Agreement; and there can be no role for any third party.

पारपत्र जारी करने हेतु समय-सीमा

7963. श्री ईश दत्त यादव :

चौधरी हरमोहन सिंह :

क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सरकार पांच सप्ताह में पारपत्र जारी करने हेतु कोई नियम बना रही है ; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है ?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री आर. एल. भाटिया) (क) और (ख) पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों का यह प्रयास रहता है कि एक माह की अवधि के भीतर पासपोर्ट जारी कर दिए जाएं । इस समय 23 में से 17 पासपोर्ट कार्यालय 6 से 8 सप्ताह के भीतर पासपोर्ट जारी कर रहे हैं । यह सुनिश्चित करने के लिए कि पासपोर्ट एक यथोचित समय सीमा के भीतर जारी हो जाएं, भरसक प्रयास किया जाता है इसमें कार्यालय सुविधाओं को उन्नत बनाना, प्रणालियों और क्रियाविधियों की समीक्षा करना, पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों का नियमित निरीक्षण, अनुवर्ती कार्रवाई और कम्प्यूटरीकरण शामिल है । कार्यात्मक और आधारभूत संरचना की दृष्टि से यह अभी संभव नहीं है कि पासपोर्ट जारी करने के लिए नियमत: कोई निश्चित अवधि तय की जाए।

Applications pending in Passport offices

7964. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how many passport applications were pending with various passport offices till the 30th April, 1995;

(b) how many of the applications are pending six months and above;

(c) what is the maximum time taken at Bangalore Passport Office to issue a passport; and

(d) what are the steps taken by Government to clear the pending passports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Details are contained in the Statement (*See* below).

(c) The average time taken at Bangalore Passport Office to issue a passport is presently 70 days.

(d) Government has taken various steps to clear the backlog which include upgradation of office facilities, computerisation of Passport Offices, Review of systems and procedures to reduce delays, regular inspection of Passport Offices and monitoring the follow up action. As a result total pendency which stood at 114835 in December 1992 was brought down to 294753 as on 28-4-95 17 out of 23 passport Offices are issuing passports in 6-8 weeks.